

Deuteronomy 32:1-52 Torah Reading (Parashat Ha-Azinu)
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version September 23, 2020

32:1 Give ear, O heavens, [that I may speak]. Hear, O earth [the utterance of my mouth].
2 [May these words] [drop like rain]—[the words I received]. Let it flow like dew—my saying,
like raindrops [on the young growth], [and like showers] on the grass.
3 [Because indeed], the name of YHWH I proclaim. Tell of the greatness of our God!
4 [For He is the Rock]: perfect is His work, for all of His ways are justice. A God who is faithful, who does no wrong. Just and upright is He.
5 Corruption [belongs not to Him], [no indeed]: in His *children* is the flaw—a generation perverse and crooked.
6 Is it YHWH [whom you requite this way], you people foolish and unwise?
[Is He not] your father—your creator, [end aliyah] He who made you [and who reared you].
7 Remember the days [of ages past]. Consider the years [down through the generations].
Ask your father [that he may inform you]; your elders, [that they may tell you]:
8 [When a heritage] [from the Most High] [was given to the nations]; [when He split up] the children of man (*adam*),
[He set up] the borders of the peoples, [corresponding to the number] of the sons of Israel (“the 70 nations”).
9 [And yet it is true]: the portion of YHWH is His people; Jacob, the lot of His inheritance.
10 [God found him] in a region of the desert, in the desolate, howling wasteland.
[God encompassed him] and [gave mind to him], [guarding him] like the pupil of His eye.
11 [Like an eagle] watching his nest, over his fledglings he hovers. [God spreads out] his wings [to hold him], [supporting him] on his pinions.
12 YHWH alone was his guide. [end aliyah] There was not with him, an alien power (*El*).
13 [God caused him to ride] on the heights of the earth, [and had him eat] [the ripe fruit] of the field.
[He suckled him] with honey [from a stone], and oil [from a flintrock].

32:14 Butter from cattle and milk [from the flocks], with fat of lambs and rams of the Bashan, and he-goats, and the fat of kernels of wheat, [and blood of grapes] [you drank for wine].

15 [He grew fat], Jeshurun, and he kicked. [You were fat], you were gross, you were bloated. You abandoned the God [who had made you], and despised the Rock of your salvation.

16 [They made God jealous] [with alien things]; [with vile deeds] [they made Him angry].

17 [And they sacrificed] the demons [that were] [no gods] (*lo' 'eloha*), deities (*elohim*) that they [had not known], [new ones], recently arrived, that were never considered by their fathers.

18 The Rock who bore you, you neglected. [end aliyah] You forgot the God (*El*) who begot you.

19 This was seen by YHWH, [who then spurned them], from the provocation of His sons, and of His daughters.

20 [And God said this]: “[I will hide] My face [from them]. [I shall see] what will be their end.

For a brood of perversity [are they]—children with no trust in them.

21 Indeed, [they provoked Me] [with a non-god] (*lo' 'el*), [they vexed Me] with their vanities (from *hevel*), [so that I] [will provoke them] [with a non-people] (*lo' am*), with a nation of fools, [I will vex them].

22 For fire has flared in My nostrils and blazed to *Sheol* down below.

[It shall consume] the earth and its produce, [setting fire] to the base of the mountains.

23 I will hurl down upon them misfortunes. My arrows [I will use up against them].

24 Wasted [by famine they'll be], withered by blight, and by scourges quite bitter.

[The fangs of beasts] [I will send against them], along with the venom of creepers in the dust.

25 Outside: [bereft by the sword], and within will be terror. Both youth [and young maidens], and infants and men with gray hair.

26 [I would have said], “[I will wipe them out], so that gone from among men is their memory,

27 [were it not for the fact] that the taunts of the enemy [I did fear], [lest they be misjudged] by their foes; [lest they say], “[Our hand was high]. It was not YHWH who did all of this.”

28 [Since a nation that is] bereft of counsel, they are. [end aliyah] They have no sense of discernment.

32:29 Were they wise, they would contemplate this. [They would understand] [their latter days].
 30 [How could it occur] that routed [by just one man] was a thousand; [how could two] put to flight [even ten thousand],
 [if it were not] that their Rock [had sold them out]; YHWH [had given them up].
 31 [For it is true]: not like *our* Rock, [is *their* rock], even though our enemies, [so assess* it]. *Everett Fox
 32 [For the vine] that is Sodom's [is their vine]; [from the vineyards] of Gomorrah.
 Their grapes are grapes of poison; clusters that are bitter, indeed.
 33 The poison of serpents is their wine; the venom of cobras, quite fierce.
 34 Is it not this, [that is stored up] with Me; [sealed up] in My treasuries.
 35 [To Me belong] vengeance and recompense at the time of the slipping of their foot.
 Since it is near—their day of calamity, [bringing quickly] that which is prepared *for* them.
 36 [Because championed] (*ya-din*) by YHWH is His people. For his servants, He will relent,
 [when He will have] seen [that strength is gone] [from their hands]: [nothing left] of both fettered and free.
 37 [He will say], “Where are [their gods]—the rock, when they sought refuge in it,
 38 of whom the fat of their offerings [they did eat]; they drank the wine of their libation.
 [Let them now get up] [and help you]: let them stand over you as a shelter.
 39 [But you must understand]: [now is the time you must see] [that indeed] I—[it is I]—[I am He]. No other god is beside Me.
 [It is surely I] [who brings death] [and who gives life]. If I shatter, I also heal. [end aliyah] No one can—from My hand—make a rescue.
 40 For I raise to the heavens my hands, [and I say], “As I live forever.”
 41 When I hone my flashing sword and grasp judgment in My hand,
 [I will wreak] vengeance [on My foes], [and to those who hate Me], [I will pay them back].
 42 [I will make drunk] My arrows with blood, [and My sword] [will swallow up] flesh,
 with the blood of the slain and the captives from the head—thick with locks—of the enemy.
 43 [Sing for joy], O nations, [over His people], since the blood of his servants He will avenge.
 Vengeance [He will turn back] [upon His foes], [end aliyah] thus purging His land for His people.

32:44 Then [Moses came forward] [and he proclaimed] all the words of this song in the ears of the people—
[he himself], and Hoshea (Joshua) son of Nun.

45 [When he had finished]—[Moses was done] [reciting the words], all the words we just heard, [to all Israel],

46 [He then said] to them, “[You must] [set your hearts] [upon all these words]—[these very words] [with which I myself]
bear witness against you today, [that you must] enjoin on your children to observe and to do all the words of the teaching you heard.

47 [For you must understand]: [no small thing]—[no empty word]—[is it] for you, [since it is] your life. And [it is through these words]
[that you will prolong] your days upon the land of which you [are about to cross over] [the River Jordan] [to get there], and possess it.”

48 Then spoke YHWH to Moses [on that very day]—after Moses had spoken—[God said this]:

49 “[You must go to the top] [of the mountain]—through this Avarim—[up to Mount Nebo],

which is in the land of Moab, [and which lies] facing Jericho,

[and you will see] the land of Canaan—the land [that I] [am going to give] to the children of Israel for a possession.

50 [And you will die] [on the mountain] on which you [are going up], [and be gathered] to your people,

[the same way that there died] Aaron your brother on Hor the Mountain, [and was gathered] to his people.

51 [This is because] you both broke faith [with Me] in the midst of *B'nei Yisrael* at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh,
[in the Desert of Tzin], because [you did not] sanctify Me among the children of Israel.

52 Indeed, from the far side [you will see] the land,

but thereto [you shall not] go—[into the land] [end aliyah] that I am giving to the children of Israel.

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)